

Sample Slab Update #8 – December 2015

The newsletter for sample slab collectors

Book News

The most prestigious coin publication, *The Numismatist*, reviewed Sample Slabs briefly in the January 2016 issue (see sidebar). The neutral review includes an ANA library catalog number, meaning the book is now in the ANA library and permanently available for borrowing. Sample slab collectors should be happy to see our specialty again seen as worthy of interest by a major publication.

The first printing is nearly sold out, with about 10 copies left. I am leaning towards (but not promising) a second edition instead of a second printing. Sample Slab Update readers have sent me so many new varieties that I am thinking of updating the catalog in 2016 instead of my original plan of 2018 or 2019. New styles, also, continue to appear on eBay.

When and if the book sells out I will, of course, continue to make e-books available.

Market notes

Overall, the market is similar to what we saw when the last newsletter came out in October. Prices for common samples tend to be above catalog values, such as the many sales of very common PCGS green-label dimes for \$15 - \$20. New sample collectors are starting with the low-price items and increasing their values. Scarcer samples are mixed, with the occasional surprisingly low figure (such as the two uncommon NGC Mongolia 200 tugrik samples that sold for under \$20 each), but also some strong prices.

One of the most interesting of these strong prices was the \$211.50 earned by an Accugrade sample with a 1978 Eisenhower on 10/31. With catalog number Accugrade-100-1-1, this was the first sample from this certifier I have yet seen on eBay.

Another intriguing sample was the empty PCGS sample that sold quickly in a Buy It Now on 11/9 for \$49.95. Labeled as a 1933 \$20 but containing no coin (see next page), this could have sold for much more in an auction. The seller was Dr. Michael Fey, a Morgan dollar authority and author of two books on VAMs. He does not remember for certain where he got the slab, but says this was the last of four he had at one time. He explained, “I had 4 of these and suspect I got them while I was Governor of the ANA in 2007, perhaps at the Denver show while the 10 1933 \$20s were on display.”

NEW RELEASES

► **Sample Slabs: Including Sample, Promotional, Club, Show, Luncheon, Novelty, and Young Numismatist Coin and Currency Holders.** David Schwager (AA60.S1).

This text is the first to discuss an emerging area of numismatics—collecting sample slabs. Numismatists enjoy hunting for something different, and these items satisfy that urge. The book offers a review of 580 sample and related coin and paper money holders from 32 grading services. Schwager discusses the history of collecting; how to collect; numbering systems; and varieties.

The remaining text presents the slabs, organized by issuing grading service. Varieties are given with values, based on a detailed 20-month period—invaluable for someone searching the marketplace. More than 600 photos are included.

The 5½ x 8½-inch, 446-page softcover is available for \$25, plus \$5 shipping. A downloadable PDF is offered for \$14. To purchase or obtain more information, visit www.sampleslabbook.com.

Review, *The Numismatist*, January 2016



Empty PCGS sample

I was happy to add another obscure grader to my collection with a CNCS promotional slab for the 2013 Hong Kong International Coin Convention (CNCS-Cy1-1-1). I was also lucky enough to find a blue label PCGS Morgan dollar sample (PCGS-100-3-2). Although many are labeled 1921 with 1921-S coins, this is the only one I have seen with a 1921-S label and the correct coin number (7300) for a 1921-S dollar.

Ending just a few days ago was the run of NGC Liberty nickels sold by SG Rare Coins of Hawthorne, New Jersey under three different eBay IDs. The NGC Liberty nickel sample has a catalog value of \$70, which was a reasonable amount based on the information available at publication. The price data used in the catalog included five sales averaging \$72.16. When the SG Rare Coins sales started in June, however, the price was depressed by several PCGS and NGC

Liberty nickel samples sold in the prior few months. SG sold their first for \$44 on 6/28 and prices slowly trended downward from there. Seeing bargains, I bought six samples at prices from \$41 to \$26. Prices bottomed out four months after the sales started, at \$18.50 on 10/24 for a 1904 coin.

Then something interesting happened. I wrote in the catalog that it was probably impossible to build a Liberty nickel set of samples, even combining NGC and PCGS. Wrong again. Seeing the abundance of samples and variety of dates, some collectors saw the opportunity to build impressive sets and began bidding up dates. Prices rebounded at the end, with \$86.99 for an 1899 on 11/21 and \$89 for a 1905 on Thanksgiving 11/26. Generic slabs, where the dates did not matter, turned into desirable better dates. The last SG sale was 12/4, but, only two days later, another seller earned \$71.50 for a 1910. By the end of the episode, prices rebounded to about the catalog value of \$70.

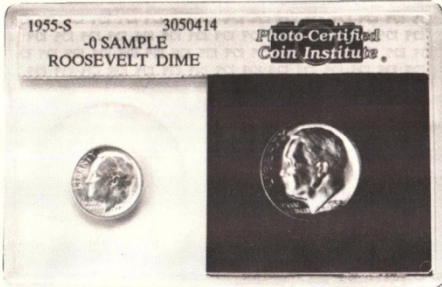
PCGS Plans Sample Slab Display for January FUN show

I reported on this in the [October newsletter](#). Since then, PCGS sent [a press release](#) on the display. They were kind enough to mention the catalog and website.

Sample Slabs in The Numismatist Archives. “Yes, send me my FREE sample slab.”

The American Numismatic Association recently made the entire 127-year run of its journal, The Numismatist, available online to members. Reaching back to 1888, this is a valuable research tool and another good reason to join the ANA. I searched on “sample slab” and, among other things, found this ad from October 1989 (next page).

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This not only explains the source of the intriguing PCI photoslabs, such as the pictured PCI-010-1-2, but shows the phrase "sample slab" was in use by 1989. Try searching the archives for "sample slab" and you will find a few other references.

Buying and Selling

Sample Slab Update sale #2 went well, with most of the scarcer slabs selling in the first 24 hours. If you would like to see what is still available, please [see here](#). I will probably put the remaining slabs on eBay in January, so you will get a chance at some of them there, as well. I am also interested in buying, especially from minor grading services.

Sample Slab Update #8 – December 2015 (sent 12/26/15). By David Schwager, Fountain Valley, California. davidschwager@hotmail.com. Please email me to be added to or removed from the mailing list. Comments and submissions are welcome. SampleSlabBook.com